

P 220721Z APR 96

FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5627
INFO ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000290

DEPT. FOR EAP/PIMBS
SINGAPORE FOR ARMA
CINCPAC ALSO FOR FPA - AMB. SALMON

E.O. 12958: 4/19/16

TAGS: PREL MARR BX

SUBJECT: SULTAN: BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE US "EXCELLENT"

¶1. CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR THERESA A. TULL.
REASON: 1.5(B) AND (D).

¶2. SUMMARY: DURING MY APRIL 16 FAREWELL CALL, THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI WAS EFFUSIVE IN EXPRESSING HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE "EXCELLENT" STATE OF THE US-BRUNEIAN RELATIONSHIP, AND HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY ABOUT WHAT HE PERCEIVES TO BE MY ROLE IN CONTRIBUTING TO THIS. HE NOTED HIS PLEASURE AT HIS APEC CONTACTS WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON; I SAID I HOPED THAT THE CANCELLED OSAKA MEETING COULD BE RESCHEDULED FOR MANILA. THE SULTAN REPEATED HIS APPRECIATION OF THE US FORWARD-DEPLOYED PRESENCE IN THE REGION, AND INDICATED SOME CONCERN ABOUT RECENT CHINESE BEHAVIOR.

¶3. I THANKED HIS MAJESTY FOR HIS COOPERATION ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN, AND ASKED THAT HE CONSIDER AIDING THE BOSNIAN TRAIN AND EQUIP EFFORT. I ALSO THANKED HIM FOR SELECTING THE BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER FOR HIS AIR FORCE, AND PUT IN A WORD ON BEHALF OF THE HARPOON AND SEA SPARROW MISSILE SYSTEMS BEING CONSIDERED FOR BRUNEI'S OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS. END SUMMARY

¶4. I PAID MY FAREWELL CALL ON SULTAN HASSANAL BOLKIAH APRIL 16. THE SULTAN LAUNCHED OUR DISCUSSION BY EXPRESSING HIS COMPLETE SATISFACTION WITH WHAT HE TERMED THE "VERY EXCELLENT" STATE OF THE US-BRUNEIAN BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. HE SAID THAT THE RELATIONSHIP HAD ALWAYS BEEN VERY GOOD, BUT THAT COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD INCREASED MARKEDLY, HE THOUGHT, DURING MY TENURE AS AMBASSADOR. HE THANKED ME FOR WHAT HE PERCEIVED TO BE MY ROLE IN THIS ACHIEVEMENT.

PRAISE FOR PRESIDENT CLINTON

¶5. THE SULTAN RECALLED FONDLY HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE BLAKE ISLAND APEC LEADERS MEETING, WHERE HE HAD FIRST MET PRESIDENT CLINTON. HE SAID THAT HE LIKED VERY MUCH THE PRESIDENT'S WARM, INFORMAL MANNER, AND REMEMBERED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE TWO WERE VERY NEARLY THE SAME AGE. HE SAID HE HAD WELCOMED SEEING THE PRESIDENT AGAIN AT THE BOGOR APEC MEETING.

¶6. I TOLD THE SULTAN THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD REGRETTED HAVING TO CANCEL HIS PARTICIPATION AT THE OSAKA APEC MEETING, AND HIS PLANNED BILATERAL MEETING WITH THE SULTAN, FOR WHICH THE LATTER HAD RESCHEDULED HIS TRIP TO OSAKA. THE SULTAN SAID THAT HE COMPLETELY UNDERSTOOD THE REASON FOR THE THIS. I TOLD HIM THAT I HOPED THAT THE TWO WOULD BE ALBLE TO RESCHEDULE THE BILATERAL FOR THE MANILA APEC MEETING, BUT

CAUTIONED THAT I COULD NOT BE CERTAIN THAT THLS
COULD BE ARRANGED.

THE US IS A PROTECTIVE PRESENCE IN THE REGION

¶7. THE SULTAN REPEATED HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED APPRECIATION FOR THE U.S. FORWARD-DEPLOYED MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION, WHICH HE SAID KEEPS THE REGION STABLE. HE WELCOMES THE PRESENCE OF THE 7TH FLEET IN THE REGION (TWO OF WHOSE FRIGATES WILL BE IN BRUNEI APRIL 22-27 FOR BILATERAL EXERCISES).

¶8. ON CHINA, THE SULTAN SAID THAT THE RECENT CHINESE INTIMIDATION OF TAIWAN HAD BEEN A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. HE SAID THAT THE U.S. IS A SUPERPOWER, BUT IS WELCOMED AS A HELPFUL PRESENCE, IN THE REGION TO PROTECT IT AND PROVIDE SECURITY. CHINA IS SOMETIMES A SOURCE OF WORRY TO ITS REGIONAL NEIGHBORS, HE SAID. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE U.S. WOULD PROTECT TAIWAN IF NEED BE.

COOPERATION ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, BOSNIA TRAIN AND EQUIP

¶9. I THANKED THE SULTAN FOR HIS HIGH PRAISE OF THE STATUS OF THE U.S. RELATIONSHIP, AND CITED BRUNEI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THIS, SUCH AS THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON DEFENSE COOPERATION, AND BRUNEI'S COOPERATION, INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS, ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN. I SAID THAT MY GOVERNMENT WAS MOST APPRECIATIVE OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S HELP ON KEDO, AID TO THE PALESTINIANS, AND ON BOSNIA. I WELCOMED BRUNEI'S RECENT PLEDGE OF \$8 MILLION TO AID REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN BOSNIA. I THEN NOTED THE CONTINUING NEED FOR FUNDS TO LAUNCH THE IMPORTANT BOSNIAN TRAIN AND EQUIP PROGRAM. I SAID THAT I WAS AWARE OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S RELUCTANCE TO BREAK WITH TRADITION AND PROVIDE MILITARY INSTEAD OF HUMANITARIAN AID, BUT SUGGESTED THAT THIS UNIQUE SITUATION MIGHT PROVE A WORTHWHILE EXCEPTION TO BRUNEI'S POLICY, AND ASKED THAT HE CONSIDER A CONTRIBUTION. HE WAS NONCOMMittal BUT SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE BOSNIAN MUSLIMS NEEDED HELP IN THIS REGARD.

MILITARY SALES EFFORTS

¶10. I THANKED THE SULTAN FOR SELECTING SIKORSKY'S BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER FOR HIS AIR FORCE. HE SAID THAT THE BLACKHAWK WAS POWERFUL, HE LIKED FLYING HIS, AND HIS AIR FORCE HAD WANTED IT. I THEN MENTIONED THAT TWO U.S. MISSILES WERE IN THE RUNNING FOR PLACEMENT, IN SEPARATE SYSTEMS, ON BRUNEI'S OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS, THE HARPOON AND THE SEA SPARROW. IN A VERY LOW-KEY FASHION, I EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THESE BIDDERS WOULD RECEIVE A FAIR HEARING, AND THE HOPE THAT THE SYSTEMS WOULD BE SELECTED. THE SULTAN WAS NONCOMMittal, SAYING ONLY THAT A COMMITTEE WAS REVIEWING THESE BIDS AND HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED A RECOMMENDATION.

COMMENT

¶11. THE SULTAN WAS OBVIOUSLY SINCERE IN HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE STATE OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, HIS ADMIRATION FOR PRESIDENT CLINTON, AND IN HIS CONTINUING APPRECIATION FOR THE POSITIVE ROLE THE U.S. MILITARY PLAYS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION. HIS APPRECIATION LIKELY

HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY HIS ACKNOWLEDGED CONCERN
ABOUT CHINA'S RECENT BEHAVIOR.

¶12. CONCERN ABOUT CHINA AND APPRECIATION FOR
THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION ARE
THEMES WHICH HAVE BEEN REFLECTED IN SEVERAL OF
MY FAREWELL CALL DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR
OFFICIALS. THE APRIL 22-27 BILATERAL NAVAL
EXERCISES HERE WITH TWO FRIGATES OF THE 7TH
FLEET ARE WELL-TIMED TO PROVIDE WELCOME PHYSICAL
EVIDENCE OF THE U.S. PRESENCE. THE BRUNEIANS
ARE COOPERATING WHOLEHEARTEDLY IN THE WEEK'S
PROGRAM, NOT ONLY IN THE ACTUAL EXERCISES
THEMSELVES, BUT IN HOUSING, FEEDING, AND
TRANSPORTING A SMALL 7TH FLEET BAND WHICH WILL
PERFORM SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE SHIPS' STAY.
THIS UNPREDECENTED LEVEL OF COOPERATION MAY HAVE
BEEN TRIGGERED IN PART BY UNEASE OVER CHINA.

¶13. WE SHOULD NOT TAKE BRUNEI'S COOPERATION
WITH THE U.S. ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES FOR
GRANTED. THE PERSONAL TOUCH IS MOST IMPORTANT,
AND THE SULTAN'S SENSE OF PERSONAL RAPPORT WITH
THE PRESIDENT IS GENUINE. THE DECISION LAST
YEAR TO SEEK A BILATERAL MEETING BETWEEN THE
PRESIDENT AND THE SULTAN DURING THE APEC
LEADERS' MEETING, TO THANK HIM FOR THIS
COOPERATION, WAS A WISE ONE. I RECOMMEND THAT
THE BILATERAL MEETING BE RESCHEDULED FOR THE
PHILIPPINES' APEC MEETINGS. IT IS NOT ONLY THE
POLITE THING TO DO, BUT IT COULD PAY DIVIDENDS
IN TERMS OF FUTURE COOPERATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS
TO INTERNATIONAL CAUSES SUPPORTED BY THE U.S.
END COMMENT

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